



# Town of Berwyn Heights

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**MAYOR**  
Stephen D. Isler

**COUNCIL MEMBERS**  
Jason W. Papanikolas (Mayor Pro Tem)  
Amanda M. Dewey  
Jeffrey Jay Osmond  
Ethan D. Sweep

## Worksession Minutes March 2, 2020 | 7:00 pm

Present were Mayor Stephen Isler, Mayor Pro Tempore (MPT) Jason Papanikolas, Councilmembers (CMs) Amanda Dewey and Ethan Sweep. CM Jay Osmond had an excused absence. Also present were Town Manager (TM) Maria Broadbent, Clerk Kerstin Harper, Officer Paul Roberson, Compost Crew representatives Ben Parry and Thomas Fazio, and citizens.

### 1. Announcements

Officer Roberson reported that Berwyn Heights Police responded to the McDonald's at 6219 Greenbelt Road on Sunday afternoon for an armed robbery. The suspect drove up to the drive-through window, exited the car and threatened the attendant with a pistol. He was able to open and empty the cash register and get away before police arrived. No-one was injured. The suspect, who was captured on video, is believed to have committed other robberies in the area. Prince George's County Police is investigating. Anyone who has information about the case is requested to contact Prince George's County Police at 301-772-3905. In response to a question from Phil Ventura, 57<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Officer Roberson said the McDonald's has excellent security and is monitoring the entire property with cameras.

### 2. Discussion Items

**Food waste collection system:** CM Dewey explained several neighboring communities have implemented or are thinking about implementing food waste collection programs. She wanted to learn more about it and has asked TM Broadbent to invite a local vendor to discuss their services. Compost Crew's CEO, Ben Parry, said he started the business in 2011 with the goal to divert food scraps from the landfill and turn it into compost to be used in gardens and fields. The company aims to make the service widely available and has signed up thousands of customers in the greater Washington area, including a number of municipalities, College Park, Chevy Chase, and Fairfax among them.

Thomas Fazio, Compost Crew's Organics Solutions Associate, said the company currently offers 3 different methods of recycling food scraps:

1. drop off at designated location in a bin or bins provided by Compost Crew.
2. curbside collection partial subsidy
3. curbside collection full subsidy

College Park started recycling food scraps a year ago with one drop-off bin, has since increased the volume to 8 bins, and is now thinking about transitioning to curbside collection. This is a good example of how the system works: starting out small and expanding as awareness and participation grow. Starting small allows for training participants to compost the right way. Compost Crew provides education and promotional services to increase awareness and 'how to' with the ultimate goal to reduce the organic waste that goes into a landfill.

In response to questions, Mr. Parry and Mr. Fazio said clients choose the method that best fits their community and their budget. The most cost-effective way is to initially provide a drop-off bin to gauge interest, and then allow customers to sign up for more convenient curbside collection. Compost Crew offers discounts based on the number of subscribers. Eventually, a municipality may decide whether to offer curbside collection for everyone that is either partially or fully subsidized. The cost of the service varies with the size of the bins, the number of bins and collection interval. For a small town like Berwyn Heights the cost is not likely to exceed \$4,000.

If starting with drop-off bins, they should be placed in an accessible, but not overly convenient location. Smaller, 35-gallon bins have the advantage of being easier to relocate. Compost Crew can provide compostable liners to participants to collect and drop off their food scraps, or household compost buckets if curbside collection is offered. Food waste materials accepted include vegetables, fruits, meats, bones and dairy products, as well as compostable food service items, plus pizza boxes. Customers have the option to have finished compost returned to them. Currently, Compost Crew brings the food scraps to Prince George's County's facility but plans to set up its own facility in a more rural location.

CM Dewey noted that composting organics is a top priority for Green Team members and was one of the top environmental concerns residents cited in a recent Town survey.

Phil Ventura, 57<sup>th</sup> Avenue, suggested collecting other recyclable materials, such as aluminum cans, which may bring in revenue, if a compost drop-off location is set up.

***Coronavirus preparedness:*** CM Sweep said he has become concerned about the amount of conflicting and wrong information circulating about the coronavirus 'COVID-19' pandemic and has prepared a fact sheet that explains how the virus is believed to spread and how people can best protect themselves. There are a number of common-sense measures people can take to avoid infection and prevent spreading the disease. These include washing one's hands often, covering one's mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing, and avoiding close contact with sick persons. On the other hand, wearing a face mask is not recommended because most masks are not effective against viral infections and the limited supply of masks is needed by medical professionals.

CM Sweep said he believes the outbreak is likely to cause significant disruptions but would urge people not to panic. Instead one should make preparations for the eventuality of schools and/or public transport closings and stock food and other necessities, including medicines. As a municipality, Berwyn Heights has emergency protocols in place and would follow instructions from the Prince George's County Health Department if any area-wide measures are taken to contain the disease.

CM Dewey said it is important to be aware of and address recent racially-motivated attacks around the country on people from China, South Korea, Iran and other countries where the virus first appeared. Travelers who have visited these countries are just as likely to carry the virus as people who live there. If one wants to reduce the chances of being infected, it is best to avoid social contacts. The Council agreed and advised those who are sick to stay home and to check the Center for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) website to stay informed about developments regarding COVID-19.

Phil Ventura asked whether the Council has any information about the water supply being affected by the outbreak. CM Sweep said this virus is transmitted through inhaled droplets of infected persons and not by ingestion of water or food.

***Summer scholarship proposal:*** CM Dewey proposed to spend \$1,000 of the Council's \$4,000 education budget to fund a summer opportunity scholarship for Berwyn Heights students. Each scholarship would

be capped at \$500, allowing for two \$500 scholarships or more smaller scholarships to be awarded, depending on applications received. The purpose of the scholarship is to help disadvantaged students gain access to summer enrichment programs that may offer experiences and training valuable for their future academic or professional development. The program would be broadly defined and might support attendance of an academic camp, a leadership program or study abroad program, for example. It would be up to the student to explain why the camp is valuable or useful to him or her.

In discussion, Council considered whether to require a statement of financial need as the scholarship is intended to help students who would not normally be able to afford such programs. It was agreed to:

1. look into using students' eligibility for free and reduced-price meals as criterion for awarding the scholarship;
2. have recipients report back to Council on how they benefited from the program they attended; and
3. advertise the scholarship at the next Town meeting, in the April Bulletin and through the school, PTA, EAC and Boys and Girls Club.

The Council also discussed a request from the Berwyn Heights Elementary School PTA to fund traveling science programs from the Maryland Zoo, the Maryland Science Center or the Maryland Agricultural Education Foundation in this school year. The money would come from the same Council education line item that would fund the summer scholarship program. No decision was made at this time.

### **3. Minutes**

The Council reviewed the minutes of the February 12 Town meeting to be adopted at the March Town meeting.

### **4. Department Reports**

TM Broadbent informed she will testify at a hearing in Annapolis this Saturday morning at which Town's bond bill request for Town Center improvements will be considered. Councilmembers are welcome to attend and support the bill. County Councilmember Glaros is hosting a meeting for elected officials on March 24. Town Center lighting will soon be upgraded to LED lighting through a Pepco program but may require dimmer switches to be installed, because some have complained that the lights are too bright.

CM Sweep announced the March 3 candidate filing deadline for people wanting to run for Town Council. Forms are available on the Town website. CM Dewey announced upcoming meetings and events, including a St. Patrick's Day potluck and a community garden orientation.

### **5. Town Council Schedule**

The Council reviewed the upcoming schedule.

### **7. Citizens Discussion**

Phil Ventura asked whether the Council would consider writing a letter opposing a sales tax proposal that would tax a wide range of services that have not been taxed before to raise money for education reforms known as the Kirwan Commission plan.

Mayor Isler said he has not heard about the tax proposal but is aware of the Kirwan Commission plan which is likely to bring many changes to the school system in coming years. He is not prepared to make a statement until he has found out more about it. CM Sweep noted the Council recently decided it will only send a letter on behalf of the Council if all Councilmembers are in agreement about a topic. Individual Councilmembers are free to send letters expressing an opinion on their own behalf.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:29 p.m.

Signed: *Kerstin Harper*, Town Clerk